

Connecticut Communist Party USA

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Labor and Public Employees Committee

Testimony, Thursday, March 5, 2015

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Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, members of the Labor Committee,

It is an honor to have the opportunity to testify before this committee in March, during Women's History Month, in favor of bills to improve job stability and conditions of working women and all low wage workers in our state. This testimony is in support of all of the bills that comprise the Women's Economic Agenda as well as the three bills on wage theft. I will speak specifically on a few:

HB 6932: The time has come to enact paid family and medical leave in Connecticut. In 1988 our state was in the forefront by enacting family and medical leave five years before the national law was passed. Now, we need to catch up to the conditions of today, as other states have enacted paid FMLA.

Thousands of workers, disproportionately African American and Latina women, live from paycheck to paycheck and cannot afford to utilize FMLA when there is need for emergency care for sick children or aging parents. Many of us probably know someone who has been in this difficult situation and the crises that result. Family economic security is basic to strong communities and a strong Connecticut economy.

Last year's status report on women in Connecticut's workforce by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women confirms that more women are in the workforce, more women are single, and the race/gender wage gap for women persists. The recommendation for "expansion of family friendly workplace policies including paid sick days and paid family and medical leave" is a concrete step toward equality that the legislature should take.

SB 914 and SB 1037: A tremendous contribution has been made to our state by those courageous immigrant workers who have risked their job, refused to be victims of unpaid labor, and took action against their employers who broke the law and failed to pay proper wages and hours. There is powerful testimony on some of those cases today.

While the legal remedy for failure to pay wages is double wages, many workers never recover what they rightfully earned because some employers find ways to hide their assets. These bills would allow liens on employers to recover what is owed. They are simple fixes that should provide incentive to employers to abide by the law and would therefore be of benefit to all workers.

HB 6791: Our state cannot afford to keep subsidizing large employers like WalMart and McDonalds who pay low wages and no benefits while encouraging their employees to sign up for state services. This bill would require such corporations to pay a fee for each worker who receives poverty wages to offset the cost of state programs those workers and their families are forced to rely on.

In closing it should be noted that across the country workers' rights, women's rights and immigrant rights are being undercut at a time when nearly all the recovery from the economic crisis has gone to the top 1%. Connecticut has rejected this trend and listened to the voices of the majority of people in our state. I hope the legislature will continue to be a beacon for the country